

## (January 26, 2006) Lipinski joins foes of Worth quarry plan

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Lipinski joins foes of Worth quarry plan

U.S. Rep. Dan Lipinski (D-Ill.) asked the Army Corps of Engineers on Wednesday to scrap its plan to use a former Worth quarry to dispose of silt dredged from the Calumet-Sag Channel.

"There's a real concern among Worth residents and the surrounding suburbs about what a dredging operation will mean to their environment," Lipinski said in a tour of the 70-acre Lucas-Berg Pit on the south side of 111th Street west of Harlem Avenue. "The dumping literally would occur in a lot of people's back yard."

Joining Lipinski were Worth Village President Ed Guzdziol; U.S. Rep. Peter Visclosky (D-Ind.), the ranking Democrat on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development; and officials from the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District and Army Corps. Visclosky, whose subcommittee oversees Army Corps projects and funding, came to be briefed on the dredging issue.

Although the Army Corps, which is leasing the 30-foot-deep pit from the Water Reclamation District, doesn't anticipate using it until 2013, residents fear dumping would hurt the environment and lower property values, Worth officials said.

"There's concern dredged sediment will contain potentially hazardous pollutants causing all kinds of health, dust and odor problems," said Gene Meyers, chairman of the village's Life Safety Committee. "People are worried that it also will contaminate their wells and that they'll have to live with noise from the machinery used to pump the dredgings into the pit. The bottom line is they don't want this in our area."

The former gravel pit was acquired by the Water Reclamation District and designated a dredging dumping site by the Army Corps in the late 1970s. The village, at the time, supported the acquisition and designation because it blocked plans to use the pit for a landfill operation, Guzdziol said.

The pit remained fallow for 25 years. About 5 years ago, the Army Corps, which began running out of space in existing dumpsites, began giving serious consideration to using it.

"Unless an acceptable alternative is found, there's no question we're going to need it," said Mark Anderson, the Corps' project engineer for the Lucas-Berg Pit. "We're already delaying some of the dredging operations along the Calumet-Sag Channel that need to be done."

Removing sediment from canal channels, making them deeper, is done to allow barge traffic to move more efficiently.

"Before we can use the Lucas-Berg Pit, however, we'll have to do an environmental impact study of the site and the dredgings that would go into it, making sure they're clean," he said. "The study won't be completed until about 2011, assuming we get sufficient federal funding, and then we'll need another two years to prepare the site."

Guzdziol said it would make more sense to develop the site for residential or commercial use.

"We don't question the need for dredging, but for us it's a quality-of-life issue," he said. "We need an economic boost, and that site would be ideal for a major development."

Guzdziol enlisted Lipinski's help in trying to block the Army Corps' plan, but meetings in recent months have not produced an alternative.

Under federal law, it is up to the Water Reclamation District to find an alternate site. District President Terry O'Brien, who was on the tour, noted that while the district would like to accommodate Worth, budget constraints probably will prevent it from acquiring new land along the Cal-Sag Channel for a dump.

Lipinski said he remains optimistic.

"We're going to keep meeting and talking until we find an alternative, so that we don't have to use this pit," he said.